THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • WEDNESDAY • FEBRUARY 25, 2026 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 22 • LATE CITY EDITION

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/thenewindianxpress twitter.com/newindianxpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress

NATIONWIDE HPV DRIVE FOR U-14 GIRLS TO PREVENT CERVICAL CANCER

In a major step towards eliminating preventable cancers among women, the govt will soon launch a human papillomavirus vaccination programme

IT'S IN LINE WITH WHO'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The programme directed at girls under 14 years of age, will use a single-shot Gardasil, a quadrivalent HPV vaccine that provides protection against HPV types 16 and 18, which cause cervical cancer, as well as types 6 and 11. It is in line with WHO recommendations, which identify HPV vaccination as a central pillar of the Global Strategy to Eliminate Cervical Cancer | P11

3 DOSES OF GARDASIL FOR GIRLS ABOVE 15

- It would be a special vaccination campaign but not under the Union government's Universal Immunisation Programme, sources said
- HPV vaccine offers maximum benefit for girls under 14, which is well before potential exposure to the virus. For those above 15, three doses of the shot are required. Gardasil-4 is manufactured by MSD India

₹3,927

COST OF TWO-DOSE GARDASIL-4 VACCINE IN THE OPEN MARKET

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

IAF looks at parallel Russian upgrade as Super Sukhoi awaits nod

JAVARIA RANA @ New Delhi

EVEN as the Indian Air Force's plan to upgrade 84 Su-30MKI fighters under the Super Sukhoi programme awaits clearance from the Cabinet Committee on Security, the service is eyeing a parallel upgrade of a similar or larger number of aircraft with Russia to sustain operational readiness, sources in the defence and security establishment said.

This step comes as India moves towards formalising the procurement of a fifth-generation stealth fighter, with Russia's Su-57 emerging as a leading contender.

A Russian team has recently visited Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's Nashik facility, signalling deeper engagement between the two sides.

The parallel engagement with Moscow is intended to offset long execution timelines associated with the HAL-led upgrade, which is expected to take at least seven years once it receives approval. There are concerns within the establishment about whether the projected timeline for Final Operational Clearance can be met.

"Relying solely on the indigenous upgrade could push timelines well into the next decade. A parallel track is therefore being considered to ensure operational readiness is not affected," a source said.

The source added, "Moreover, with the Super Sukhoi upgrade limited to 84 aircraft, a parallel route is needed for the remaining Su-30MKI fleet of around 175 aircraft."

The proposed Russian track is expected to focus on strengthening the aircraft's electronic warfare suite and radar. Moscow has also offered the more powerful AL-41 engines to replace the current AL-31s, and the IAF is evaluating the proposal.

Once negotiations between the two countries are completed, a separate proposal will be taken up for Acceptance of Necessity by the Defence Ministry. This will mark the first formal step in the procurement process, followed by commercial negotiations and finalisation of the contract.

"The approach is likely to mirror the MiG-21 Bison upgrade model, with parallel roles for Indian and Russian agencies. The idea is to address the squadron crunch and avoid a capability gap, especially as the IAF looks to maintain adequate 4.5-generation capability amid a potential two-front threat," the source explained.

Under the homegrown upgrade programme, HAL, in partnership with DRDO, will lead the modernisation. It will centre on Virupaksha AESA radar and an upgraded avionics suite.

The aircraft will carry Brahmos-ER cruise missiles, Astra beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles and Rudram anti-radiation missiles.

HC raps Ranveer, bars cops from coercive steps

YATHIRAJU @ Bengaluru

"IF you (Ranveer Singh) are a superstar, no worry... but you can't be loose-tongued at all..." the Karnataka High Court observed orally, before directing the state police not to take coercive steps against the Bollywood actor, provided he cooperates with the investigation till Monday, the next date of hearing.

Ranveer Singh was booked based on a complaint registered on January 28 by city-based advocate Prashanth Methal for allegedly hurting religious sentiments by mimicking the sacred Daiva tradition depicted in the Kannada movie Kantara Chapter 1, during the closing ceremony of the International Film Festival of India, on November 28, 2025, in Goa. He had allegedly mocked the Daiva tradition on stage by imitating the Daiva's divine expressions and referring to Daiva as a "female ghost".

Justice M Nagaprasanna passed the order after hearing senior counsel Sajan Poovayya, representing Singh, counsel for the complainant and state police.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

EXPRESS READ

Policy for fly-taxi will be examined: MB Patil

Bengaluru: State Minister for Large and Medium Industries MB Patil on Tuesday said the government will examine the need to formulate a policy to introduce 'fly-taxi' services in Karnataka. Industrialists have suggested introducing the services in Karnataka through a suitable policy framework, and "this will be examined seriously", he said. P4

BJP supports protest by job aspirants

Dharwad: Declaring support for the protest by job aspirants in Dharwad, BJP leaders including Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, R Ashoka and Arvind Bellad called upon the agitators to plan a padayatra to Bengaluru, and assured them that their issue would be discussed in the upcoming Budget session, starting March 6. P4

THE KERALAM STORY GETS CABINET'S NOD

Decision to change name comes ahead of Assembly poll

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

THE Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday cleared the Kerala government's proposal to rename the state as Keralam. The move comes ahead of the Assembly elections in Kerala, expected in April or May.

The decision was taken following a resolution passed by the Kerala Assembly in 2024 and forwarded to the Centre. It noted that the state is called 'Keralam' in Malayalam, while it has been officially listed as 'Kerala' in the First Schedule of the Constitution.

Explaining the process, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said it would now be forwarded to the President. The President will then refer it back to the Kerala Legislative Assembly for its views and formal passage. Thereafter, with President's approval, the proposal will return to the Centre, and Parliament will take up the constitutional amendment to effect the name change.

Officials noted that while Article 3 grants Parliament the authority to change a state's name through legislation, the process includes specific safeguards. A Bill for such a change can't be introduced in either House of Parliament without President's recommendation. If the proposal affects a state's name or boundaries, the President must first seek the views of the state legislature within a stipulated time frame.

Historical roots

In Malayalam, the state is called 'Keralam', a form rooted in Dravidian linguistic tradition, ancient political history, and early historical records including the inscriptions of Emperor Ashoka

The name 'Keralam' will manifest the state's heritage with all its authenticity and uphold its pride

Home Minister Amit Shah

The proposal to rename Kerala was examined by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. Following approval from Home Minister Amit Shah, a draft Cabinet note was circulated to the Department of Legal Affairs and the Legislative Department for their expert opinion. Both departments, functioning under the Ministry of Law and Justice, concurred with the proposal, paving the way for the next constitutional steps in the renaming process

The resolution adopted by the Kerala Assembly underscored the cultural and linguistic basis for the demand for name change. It also highlighted that since the days of the freedom struggle, there has been a sustained demand for a united Kerala for Malayalam-speaking people.

The equation for T20 WC semifinal qualification

With two matches to go in the Super 8s, a look at different scenarios for India to qualify..

Scenario 1
South Africa beat West Indies and India to win against Zimbabwe and WI — India and SA qualify

Scenario 2
South Africa lose to WI and Zimbabwe; India beat WI and Zimbabwe — WI and India qualify

Scenario 3
SA lose to WI and Zim, India beat Zimbabwe but lose to WI — WI go through, three teams on two points and it will come down to NRR

Scenario 4
SA beat WI and Zim, India lose to Zim but beat WI — SA go through, other three teams on two points and will come down to NRR

Suryakumar Yadav during a practice session ahead of T20 World Cup match against Zimbabwe at MA Chidambaram Stadium, on Tuesday | ASHWIN PRASATH

HIT-WAVE

Today's Match 7pm: New Zealand vs Sri Lanka (Colombo)

Tata Sons board bid to hand Chandra a third term runs into Noel trouble

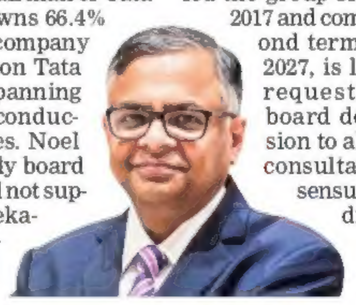
Voting put off

Sources said Chandrasekaran himself proposed deferring the vote on his re-appointment saying an institution of Tata Group's stature can function effectively only if Tata Sons and Tata Trusts are aligned in decision-making

BENN KOCHUVEEDAN @ Mumbai

IN a new twist to the Tata Group's power struggle, the board of Tata Sons on Tuesday deferred a decision on granting a third term to chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran.

According to informed sources, the move follows objections by Noel Tata, chairman of Tata Trusts which owns 66.4% of the holding company of the $120-billion Tata conglomerate spanning software, semiconductors and airlines. Noel Tata was the only board member who did not support Chandrasekaran's reappointment, while the remaining directors backed a third term.



Typically, Tata Sons' shareholders and board approve the appointment or reappointment of a chairman one year in advance to ensure stability and continuity, or to provide sufficient time for a new leader to settle in and chart strategy.

Chandrasekaran, 62, who has led the group since February 2017 and completes his second term in February 2027, is learnt to have requested that the board defer the decision to allow for wider consultation and consensus following the differences.

The development is seen as unusual, given that the trusts he works with closely had greenlighted another term for him as far back as October 2025. If the third term is approved, the board would need to amend a clause that sets the retirement age for top executives at 65. Another term would have seen Chandrasekaran complete his tenure in 2032 at the age of 69.

Noel Tata is learnt to have set four conditions for supporting the reappointment. First, Tata Sons should not pursue listing. Second, the company should remain debt-free. Third, its coffers should not be strained by excessive capital expenditure in high-risk ventures. And fourth, deep losses from acquisitions such as Air India and BigBasket must be contained.

'ANTI-NATIONAL' EVENT

ABVP resorts to vandalism at Azim Premji University

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

TENSION prevailed at Azim Premji University in Sarjapur after members of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) staged a protest in front of the university entrance and stormed into the campus, alleging that the institution had hosted an "anti-national" programme on Tuesday evening.

The protest was against a programme allegedly held to discuss the 1991 Kunan Poshpora incident, which pertains to allegations of mass rape and assault against Kashmiri women by Indian soldiers. The university, however, said that no such event was held on its campus.

After ABVP activists allegedly resorted to vandalism, police took several activists into custody. According to ABVP, an organisation named SPARK, reportedly sponsored by the All India Students' Association (AISA), conducted the programme at Azim Premji University.

During the demonstration, ABVP activists raised slogans against the university, displayed placards and the Tricolour, and smeared black ink on the university's name board as a mark of protest.

The agitation later escalated as some activists allegedly attempted to enter the university campus.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

CRASHLANDING

The wreckage of a Pawan Hans helicopter that crashed into the sea 300 metres away from its scheduled landing place at Mayabunder helipad in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on Tuesday. All seven on board were safely rescued | PTI

SC allows deployment of judges from J'khand, Odisha for Bengal SIR

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday expanded the pool of judicial manpower to conduct the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal, allowing Calcutta High Court Chief Justice Sujoy Paul to deploy additional civil judges, over and above the 250 district judges who are already on the job.

It also opened a window to requisition judicial officers from Jharkhand and Odisha to participate in the exercise.

Calcutta HC Chief Justice Sujoy Paul had on February 22 written to Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant that even if one judicial officer decides 250 matters a day, it will take at least 80 days to complete the SIR in West Bengal. He said that there were around 50 lakh cases of logical discrepancy/unmapped categories to be decided in the state.

If Aadhaar has been fraudulently procured on an industrial scale, then it requires to be statutorily regulated. RP Act was amended, and Aadhaar brought in to prove identity

- Supreme Court

The bench led by CJI Kant said, "If the CJ of Calcutta HC is of the opinion that further human resources would be required, he is at liberty to approach the CJs of Orissa and Jharkhand High Courts for serving and former judicial officers from those states, who shall then undertake the pending exercise."

The last date of publication of the final electoral roll is February 28. "If the verification exercise undertaken in respect of logical discrepancies/unmapped remains incomplete, the ECI may publish the final list on February 28, followed by supplement lists," the court said.

Invoking its extraordinary powers under Article 142, the court declared that voters enlisted in such subsequent supplementary lists shall be deemed to have been part of the final list to be published on February 28.

Minors kill 15-year-old in clash over cricket match

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Shivamogga

A 15-year-old Class 10 student was killed near Soolebailu in Shiovamogga district on Monday evening after he allegedly tried to intervene in a quarrel among a group of minors in connection with a cricket match, police said.

The deceased has been identified as **Sanketh**. Superintendent of Police Nikhil B said a friend of Sanketh was recently involved in a scuffle with another group of minors while playing cricket. On Monday evening, the group confronted Sanketh's friend again. Sanketh reportedly stepped in to mediate, but the group turned on him. He is collapsed after the assault and one of the boys alerted his parents. He was rushed to a nearby hospital where doctors declared him dead, the SP said.

The police have detained seven minors and are questioning them. Security has been tightened in and around the area to prevent any backlash, with relatives and local residents demanding justice.

Shivamogga BJP MLA SN Channabasappa met the grieving family at the hospital. On Tuesday, former deputy chief minister KS Eshwarappa also visited the family and expressed his condolences. Some local Muslim leaders also met the parents of the boy and expressed their condolences.

A case has been registered at Tunga Nagar police station in this regard. The last rites of the boy have been performed.

Govt declares Rs 15 lakh compensation

Shivamogga Deputy Commissioner Prabhuling Kavalikatti said the government has announced Rs 15 lakh compensation to the bereaved family. Of this, Rs 10 lakh will be released from the CM's Relief Fund and Rs 5 lakh will be given by the education department. Another boy who was injured in the clash will also be compensated, he said.